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Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly: regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Security Council
Fifty-seventh year

Letter dated 5 September 2002 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Central African Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the report of the eighteenth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which was held from 26 to 30 August 2002 in Bangui, Central African Republic.

The meeting made important recommendations and decided to hold the nineteenth ministerial meeting in Bangui in March 2003, on dates to be determined.

On behalf of the current Chairman of the Committee, I attach herewith the report that was adopted at the conclusion of the meeting (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 68 (c) of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Fernand **Poukré-Kono**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* A/57/150.

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Annex to the letter dated 5 September 2002 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Central African Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Report of the eighteenth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

(Bangui, 26-30 August 2002)

Introduction

The eighteenth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was held in Bangui, Central African Republic, from 26 to 30 August 2002.

The following member States took part in the meeting: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.

Angola did not attend.

Representatives of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Interim Chairman of the Commission of the African Union and the Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) also participated in the work.

The opening ceremony featured:

- A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, read by the Representative of the Secretary-General in the Central African Republic, General Lamine Cissé;
- A message from the Interim Chairman of the Commission of the African Union read by Ambassador Mamadi Diawara, Senior Political Advisor to the African Union;
- A message from the Secretary-General of ECCAS, read by Colonel Stanislas Hakizimana, Advisor to ECCAS.
- The opening and closing addresses by H.E. Mr. Gabriel Edouard Koyambonou, Minister of State for Posts, Telecommunications, Culture and la Francophonie.

Conduct of work

I. Adoption of the agenda

The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Election of the Bureau.
3. Report of the outgoing Bureau by its Chairman.
4. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa.
5. Intergovernmental cooperation in security matters in Central Africa.
6. Evaluation of the implementation of the previous decisions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee.
   (a) Establishment of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX);
   (b) Organization of the military peacekeeping exercise "Biyongho 2003";
   (c) Establishment of a subregional parliament;
   (d) Activities of the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa;
   (e) Evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Proliferation of and Illicit Traffic in Small Arms in Central Africa;
   (f) Evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the

Question of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Central Africa;

(g) Evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Protection of Women and Children in Armed Conflicts.

7. Briefing on the regional consultation on "Equality and development: participation of women in Central Africa".

8. Adoption of the Committee's programme of work for the period 2002-2003.

9. Consideration and adoption of the draft resolution on the activities of the Advisory Committee.

10. Date of the next meeting.

11. Other matters.

12. Adoption of the report of the eighteenth ministerial meeting.

II. Election of the Bureau

At the start of the ministerial session's work, the Committee elected the following Bureau:

Chairman: Central African Republic

First Vice-Chairman: Equatorial Guinea

Second Vice-Chairman: the Congo

Rapporteur: Sao Tome and Principe

III. Report of the outgoing Bureau by its Chairman

The Committee took note of the report of the outgoing Bureau presented by H.E. Mr. Leonard She Okitundu, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Committee welcomed the energetic and effective way in which the Bureau had discharged the mandates entrusted to it by the sixteenth and seventeenth ministerial meetings, with regard to the:

- Organization in Kinshasa of the Subregional Conference on the Protection of Women and Children in Armed Conflicts in Central Africa;
- Organization of the meeting of chiefs of staff in Libreville to review the Biyongho exercise;
- Raising of awareness in the countries of the subregion about the importance of signing and ratifying the Mutual Assistance Pact and the Protocol on the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX);
- Organization of the seventeenth and eighteenth ministerial meetings;
- Steps taken to launch the activities of the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa; and
- Commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Advisory Committee.

IV. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa

Angola

The Committee welcomed the positive development of the situation in Angola, in particular, the signature on 4 April 2002 of the Memorandum of Understanding Addendum to the Lusaka Protocol for the Cessation of Hostilities and the Resolution of the Outstanding Military Issues.

The Committee commended the Angolan Government on its laudable efforts to create conditions that are conducive to the resumption of the peace process and to national reconciliation and reconstruction.

The Committee expressed concern at the humanitarian situation in Angola, in particular:

- The existence of a large number of displaced persons facing malnutrition and poor health coverage;
- The tragic deterioration of living conditions of the population in zones which are difficult to access.

It commended the Angolan Government's efforts to provide assistance to the displaced populations and encouraged the Government to continue the

rehabilitation of infrastructure, dismantling of transit camps, resettlement of displaced persons and delivery of humanitarian aid.

The Committee welcomed the establishment by a Security Council resolution of 15 August 2002 of the United Nations Mission in Angola (UNMA) to, inter alia, assist the parties in concluding the Lusaka Protocol and the Angolan Government in undertaking the following tasks:

- Promotion of human rights;
- Landmine clearance;
- Delivery of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups;
- Support for social and professional reintegration of demobilized soldiers;
- Promotion of economic recovery and preparation of elections.

The Committee appealed to the international community to substantially increase aid to the Angolan Government to ease the suffering of its people who have been the victims of war, and to support the peace process. It proposed that activities aimed at the consolidation of peace, such as the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, reconstruction and economic revival, should continue to receive priority attention.

Burundi

The Committee expressed its deep concern at the deterioration of living conditions of the people of Burundi and the pervasive insecurity caused by the continued attacks against the civilian population and economic infrastructure by armed groups.

It hailed the efforts of the mediation team and some Heads of State to obtain a ceasefire and restore peace to Burundi, and encouraged the latter to continue those efforts in the context of the Arusha peace process.

It welcomed the progressive establishment of transitional institutions and expressed its support for the efforts of the Burundian Government and all Burundians engaged in the search for a lasting peace.

It invited the countries of the Central African subregion, particularly those of the Great Lakes subregion, to put pressure on the armed groups to conclude a ceasefire agreement, help the Burundians restore peace through dialogue and reconciliation and refrain from providing any direct or indirect assistance to the rebels.

The Committee addressed an urgent appeal to all armed movements to immediately cease hostilities and join in the Arusha peace process and in good faith engage in negotiations for a total and early ceasefire.

It urged all the Burundian parties to promote national reconciliation and work towards the restoration of peace in Burundi in order to permit the full implementation of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi.

The Committee urgently appealed to the international community and in particular to bilateral and multilateral donors to provide substantial support for the peace efforts and the improvement of living conditions for the people of Burundi, especially through effective implementation of commitments made in Paris and Geneva at donor conferences on Burundi.

Cameroon

The Committee paid tribute to the climate of peace and stability in Cameroon.

It welcomed:

- The peaceful conduct of the municipal and legislative elections;
- The Cameroonian Government's efforts to continue its campaign against corruption, crime and organized crime and to consolidate the gains in respect of human rights;
- The Government of Cameroon's policy of good-neighbourliness towards the other countries of the subregion.

The Committee took note of the information provided by the Cameroonian delegation on the Bakassi affair and again invited the two parties to refrain from any action that could heighten tension, pending the decision of the International Court of Justice, which Cameroon had seized of the matter relating to the land and maritime boundary between the Republic of Cameroon and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Committee, in addition to reiterating its appeal to the international community and friendly countries to assist in maintaining peace between Cameroon and Nigeria while awaiting the verdict of the International Court of Justice, requested the Court to take the necessary steps to ensure a rapid conclusion of the proceedings pending before it.

The Committee again urged Nigeria to comply strictly with the interim measures of protection laid down by the Court in its ruling of 15 March 1996 and called upon the two parties to refrain from taking any action that could create difficulties for the application of the final judgment of the Court.

The Committee invited the two countries to respect the verdict of the Court, whatever it might be, and welcomed the commitments undertaken by Cameroon in that regard.

Central African Republic

The Committee welcomed the positive developments in the political and security situation in the Central African Republic after the series of national crises that followed the attempted coup d'état on 28 May 2001, the rebellion led by the former Chief of Staff of the Central African armed forces, General Bozizé in November 2001, and the flare up of tensions on the borders between the Central African Republic and some of its neighbours.

It welcomed the return to calm in that country characterized by ongoing political dialogue between the Government and opposition and the gradual return of civilian and military refugees. It noted with satisfaction the efforts made by the Central African Government to improve the security situation and encouraged it to complete the process of disarmament and restructuring of the armed forces.

It, however, expressed its concern at the precariousness of the general security situation, in particular because of the proliferation of light weapons, the activities of gangsters and bands which set up roadblocks, the question of the military refugees who have returned to the country, and continuing tensions on the border with Chad.

The Committee was also concerned at the economic and financial difficulties facing the Central African Republic, which were manifested in particular by delays in the payment of salaries, pensions and student stipends, and difficulties in implementing the armed forces restructuring programme.

It also deplored the fact that the Central African Republic still lacked a formal cooperation programme with the Bretton Woods institutions and had received no budgetary assistance since January 2001. It thus reiterated its urgent appeal to the international community and the Bretton Woods institutions to provide the Central African Republic with the essential financial support to allow it to resolve its serious financial problems, a sine qua non for peace and development.

The Committee recalled that the prime responsibility for improving the situation in the Central African Republic rested with that country's sons and daughters and, in particular, with its political leaders. The Committee urged political leaders to place greater emphasis on dialogue, tolerance, national reconciliation, respect for human rights, democratically elected institutions and constitutional order in order to secure effective national reconstruction.

The Committee welcomed the meeting of the mixed commission on cooperation between the Central African Republic and Cameroon from 2 to 4 May 2002 at Bangui, which helped to strengthen cooperation between the two countries and to settle the issue of the demarcation and placement of boundary markers along their common border.

The Committee expressed its concern at the bloody incidents that occurred on the border between Chad and the Central African Republic and welcomed the fact that a verification and evaluation mission, comprised of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC), the African Union and the United Nations, has been sent to the field to help bring about a permanent settlement of the dispute and the normalization of relations between the two countries.

Republic of the Congo

The Committee welcomed the positive developments in the general situation in the Congo, characterized, since the establishment of an inclusive national dialogue, by an improvement in the general conditions of peace and security, the gradual return of refugees and displaced persons, the continuing collection of military weapons, demobilization and

reintegration of former combatants, and the holding of general elections without incident.

It took note of the end of the transition period on 9 August 2002 and welcomed the establishment of institutions as a result of the various elections, beginning with the installation of the two houses of Parliament and the inauguration of the President-elect H.E. Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso. It commended the determination of the new Government to fight corruption and to promote socio-economic development.

The Committee was nevertheless troubled by the recent terrorist acts carried out in the Pool region and on the outskirts of Brazzaville by armed bands, which were endangering the peace re-established after so many years of fratricidal clashes that had left many families bereft and caused considerable destruction.

It also expressed concern at the financial difficulties encountered by the programmes for the collection of weapons and reintegration of former combatants, as well as the difficulties encountered by refugees and displaced persons. It therefore appealed urgently to the international community to provide assistance to the Congo to enable it to face all these challenges and to ensure the restoration of a lasting peace and conditions conducive to the country's harmonious development.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Committee once again took note of the fundamental concerns of the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo:

- Serious human rights violations in the country, in particular the recent massacres at Kisangani and Bunia;
- The need for prompt demilitarization of Kisangani;
- Continued infringements of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo;
- Continued combat involving rebel forces and other armed groups in the east and north-east of the country, clashes between ethnic groups, the deteriorating humanitarian situation and troop movements in the east of the country, in violation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, the Kampala plan and the Harare sub-plan;
- The continued systematic plundering and unlawful exploitation of natural resources and other riches in the occupied part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Committee appeals to all the parties to respect fully the relevant Security Council resolutions on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It welcomed the continuation of contacts with all Congolese parties under the mediation of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Moustapha Niasse, aimed at reaching an inclusive agreement.

It also welcomed the meetings between the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in South Africa and the signing in Pretoria on 30 July 2002 by the two Heads of State of a peace agreement generally hailed as a sign of significant progress towards a lasting settlement of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It appeals to the international community for assistance in the implementation of this peace agreement, especially in the areas of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of armed groups and the total and orderly withdrawal of all foreign troops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It urges those parties which have not yet done so to complete their withdrawal to the new defensive positions in accordance with the Kampala plan and the Harare sub-plans for disengagement and redeployment.

Finally, the Committee urgently appeals to the international community to continue its support for the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to provide substantial assistance to the people affected by the war, as the deterioration in their living conditions is a matter of serious concern, and to respond generously to the worldwide appeal on behalf of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for 2002 launched on 27 November 2001 by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners. It also urges all parties to take the necessary measures to allow humanitarian organizations secure and unimpeded access to the people in need.

Gabon

The Committee noted with appreciation the climate of peace and political stability in Gabon and took note of the recent political dialogue between the majority and the opposition held with a view to consolidating democracy in the country.

With reference to the special recommendations of the seventeenth ministerial meeting held at Kinshasa from 22 to 26 April 2002, the Committee reiterated the need to follow up on the elaboration of a subregional convention on trafficking and exploitation of children.

Equatorial Guinea

The Committee welcomed the climate of peace and stability prevailing in Equatorial Guinea. It noted with satisfaction the continuation of the democratic process in Equatorial Guinea.

In this context, and after consultations among the country's legalized and recognized political parties, a presidential decree on voter registration was promulgated on 14 August 2002 with a view to holding presidential elections during the first half of 2003, in accordance with the applicable legislation.

Rwanda

The Committee welcomed the prevailing climate of peace and stability in Rwanda.

It welcomed the recent signing of a peace agreement between the Heads of State of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which offered hope that the conflict between the two countries will soon be resolved.

It appealed to the two countries to implement in good faith the commitments made in that Agreement.

The Committee hailed the arrest of perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide by some States in the subregion and urgently appealed to the other States of the subregion to do likewise so that those guilty of acts of genocide in Rwanda could be punished.

The Committee took note of the statement by Rwanda reporting the completion of the withdrawal of its troops to the new defensive positions assigned to them in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sao Tome and Principe

The Committee welcomed the climate of peace and stability in Sao Tome and Principe and the strengthening of the democratic process. It also welcomed the good-neighbour policy of the Government of Sao Tome and Principe towards the countries of the subregion.

Chad

The Committee welcomed the continuing democratic process in Chad and the normal functioning of its institutions.

It encouraged the Chadian Head of State, H.E. Mr. Idriss Déby, to persist in his efforts to bring about a dialogue with the various opposition movements.

It commended the efforts made by the Chadian Government with a view to the return of political exiles, including the former Head of State, General Félix Malloum, and the implementation of the peace agreement concluded in Tripoli on 7 January 2002 between the Government and the Mouvement pour la démocratie et la justice au Tchad (MDJT).

It further urged the Chadian Government and MDJT to resume implementation of the peace agreement of 7 January 2002 in order to strengthen stability and peace in the best interests of the Chadian people.

The Committee expressed its concern at the bloody incidents which had occurred on the border between Chad and the Central African Republic and welcomed the sending to the field of a verification and evaluation mission with members drawn from CAEMC, Mali, the African Union and the United Nations as part of the effort to achieve a lasting settlement of the dispute and the normalization of relations between the two countries.

V. Intergovernmental cooperation in security matters in Central Africa

The Committee took note with satisfaction of the intensification of actions and initiatives taken by the member countries within the framework of cooperation in security matters, aimed at lessening tensions, combating insecurity in the border areas and facilitating exchanges between the various national structures dealing with these questions.

In view of the cross-border nature of most of the security problems in the subregion and the need to respond to them in a joint and concerted manner, the Committee again strongly recommended continued cooperation and dialogue among the security forces of the Central African countries, particularly within the framework of periodic meetings and the organization of joint operations.

The Committee welcomed:

- The tripartite summit meeting on security matters held at Pointe Noire on 18 July 2002 among Angola, Gabon and the Congo;
- Joint border patrols among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congo and Angola;
- The sending to the border between the Central African Republic and Chad of a verification and evaluation mission made up of representatives of CAEMC, Mali, the African Union and the United Nations;
- Training and refresher courses in training centres in Cameroon in the areas of the judicial police, defense and the maintenance of public order and security for residents of the region;
- The peace agreement concluded on 30 July 2002 between the Presidents of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo;
- The Cameroon/Central African Republic mixed commission meeting held at Bangui from 2 to 4 May 2002;
- The visit to Malabo on 22 August 2002 of the Minister of State for External Relations of Cameroon bearing a message from the Cameroonian Head of State to his counterpart of Equatorial Guinea;
- The arrest by the Angolan authorities of former General Bizimungu, who was charged in the Rwandan genocide;
- The organization of joint river patrols between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo;
- The organization of joint border patrols by the security forces of the Central African countries;
- The coordination meetings between the administrative and military authorities of the border areas to defuse tensions among the population and to build confidence;
- The summit meetings on security matters held by the Central African countries at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

The Committee expressed its deep concern at the persistence of organized crime and insecurity in the countries of the subregion, particularly the development of the phenomenon of "roadblocks". It recommended the intensification of information exchanges and the organization of large-scale joint operations to combat this scourge. It recommended that a high-level meeting should be held on the question, aimed, in particular, at setting up a suitable legal framework for cooperation in the matter.

It stressed the need for closer cooperation among the security forces of the various countries with a view to combating the cross-border trade in stolen vehicles.

Recalling the importance to the subregion's peace and security of the protocol relating to COPAX, the Mutual Assistance Pact and the Non-Aggression Pact concluded between the Central African countries, the Committee recommended that the Bureau should draw the attention of those countries which had not already done so to the need to sign and/or ratify those instruments.

Aware of the need to strengthen cooperation for peace and security in the subregion, the Committee appealed to those countries that had not yet signed the agreement on criminal police cooperation, adopted at the second meeting of the Committee of Central African Police Chiefs (CCPAC) in Yaoundé in April 1999, to take all necessary steps to expedite the signing of this text and to guarantee its full effectiveness.

VI. Evaluation of the implementation of the previous decisions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee

A. Establishment of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX)

The Committee asked countries that have ratified the texts governing COPAX and the Mutual Assistance Pact to transmit the relevant instruments of ratification to the depositary country, Gabon, and urged countries

that had not yet done so to take the necessary steps to ratify those legal instruments before the next ministerial meeting. In addition, the Committee asked the secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to provide Rwanda with all the documentation concerning COPAX to enable that country to embark upon the relevant necessary procedures.

The Committee welcomed the adoption by the Heads of State and Government of the member States of ECCAS in Malabo on 17 June 2002 of the rules of procedure of the organs of COPAX, namely the Defence and Security Commission, the Central African multinational force and the Central African early warning mechanism (MARAC).

With respect to the Central African early warning mechanism, the Committee reiterated the need to conduct a study to evaluate its costs and implementation modalities.

The Committee asked the secretariat to recruit a consultant to conduct the study.

It was decided that the secretariat would obtain information from the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, the secretariat of ECCAS and the Government of Gabon, which would be supplemented by contributions from the member countries of the Committee and used to produce the terms of reference for the consultant.

B. Activities of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa

The Committee took note of the report submitted by H.E. Mr. Teferra Shiawl-Kidanekal, Director of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, on the activities of the institution.

It welcomed:

- The organization in Yaoundé on 13 and 14 June 2002 of a Conference of Ministers of Justice and Presidents of the Supreme Courts of the Central African States on the theme "Submission of reports pursuant to international human rights instruments";
- The inauguration of the Centre during the above-mentioned Conference by Mrs. Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and H.E. Mr. François-Xavier Ngoubeyou, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon;
- The granting of fellowships to interns;
- The signing, on 10 July 2002, of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and ECCAS concerning cooperation in the areas of human rights and democracy;
- The creation of a web site designed to publicize international human rights instruments.

The Director of the Centre has referred a draft resolution on the Centre's activities to the Committee for transmittal to permanent missions in New York and submission to the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly.

C. Establishment of a subregional parliament

The Committee was informed by ECCAS of the increase in the estimated number of parliamentarians from 50 to 55, so as to take account of Rwanda's participation in the establishment of the subregional parliament.

The Committee welcomed the information concerning the laying of the first stone of the subregional parliament's headquarters in Malabo. The ceremony was attended by H.E. Mr. Ange-Félix Patassé, current President of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community.

It also welcomed the adoption by the Heads of State of the member countries of ECCAS of a protocol concerning the establishment of the network of Central African parliamentarians at the Conference of Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, which was held in Malabo on 17 June 2002.

It appealed to the member countries of the Committee to ratify that protocol expeditiously.

D. Organization of a military peacekeeping exercise for Central African countries (Biyongho — 2003)

The Committee reiterated its commitment to organize, in cooperation with ECCAS, a military peacekeeping exercise involving the armed forces of its member States.

The Committee welcomed Kwanda's decision to take part in the exercise. In that connection, Rwanda set its contribution at 50 million CFA francs, in accordance with the distribution of costs established in Kinshasa during the seventeenth ministerial meeting.

The Committee welcomed Cameroon's offer to arrange transport for troops from Chad and the Central African Republic taking part in the exercise.

The Bureau was mandated to request United Nations technical support for operations relating to the "build-up" and request ECCAS to take all necessary measures to obtain additional material support from donors.

The Committee asked Gabon to transmit details of the United Nations technical support to the Bureau.

Given the delays affecting the first planning meeting, originally scheduled for early September, the Committee decided to postpone it until 23 September 2002.

E. Consideration of the implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Proliferation of and Illicit Traffic in Small Arms

The Committee took note with interest of the information transmitted by member countries on the implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Proliferation of and Illicit Traffic in Small Arms, held in N'Djamena in October 1999.

In particular, it welcomed the creation in several countries of the subregion of structures to coordinate the campaign against the proliferation of small arms and the efforts made by the security forces of those countries to collect and destroy illicit arms and to raise peoples' awareness of the dangers of owning firearms.

The Committee recommended the intensification of cooperation between the security forces of the countries of the region in the campaign against the illicit traffic in small arms.

It also appealed for increased assistance for the countries of the subregion with a view to implementing programmes for disarmament and for the mobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants, which have a positive impact on reducing the flow of illicit arms in circulation.

The Committee asked the member countries to transmit to the secretariat the details of the national focal points responsible for combating the proliferation of and illicit traffic in small arms.

F. Consideration of the implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Question of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Central Africa

The Committee took note with interest of the information transmitted by the member countries concerning the implementation of the recommendations of this Conference, which was held in Bujumbura in August 2000.

In particular, it welcomed the implementation in several countries of the subregion of a legal framework governing the situation of refugees and the efforts made by several Governments in the subregion to encourage their refugee nationals in neighbouring States to return home.

The Committee appealed to the international community, in particular the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to provide increased assistance to countries of the subregion facing problems arising from the influx of refugees.

G. Consideration of the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Protection of Women and Children in Armed Conflict in Central Africa

The Committee took note with interest of the information transmitted by member States concerning the implementation of the recommendations of this Conference, which was held in Kinshasa in November 2001.

Recognizing that women and children are the principal victims of armed conflicts and that they play a major role in the quest for solutions to such conflicts, the Committee once again recommended to member States that they should include them in delegations to its various meetings.

In particular, it urged States hosting such meetings to include women and youth in their delegations.

VII. Briefing on the regional consultation on the theme "Parity and development: participation of the Central African woman"

The Committee took note with interest of the briefing given by the Secretary of the Committee, Ms. Pamela Maponga, on this subregional consultation, which took place in Douala from 28 to 30 May 2002. The consultation, which was designed to lead to the elaboration of a regional plan of action for the following two years, was organized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women in conjunction with the Committee.

The themes of the consultation included: the feminization of poverty and new technologies; peace and security; implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000); human rights and the fight against HIV/AIDS; good governance and the participation of women in decision-making.

VIII. Adoption of the Committee's programme of work for 2002-2003

The Committee adopted the following programme of work for 2002-2003:

- Undertaking of a study on the Central African early warning mechanism;
- Workshop on the United Nations register of conventional weapons and of the reporting of military expenditures, place and date to be determined;
- Seminar on the implementation in Central Africa of the programme of action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, place and date to be determined;
- Nineteenth ministerial meeting, March 2003 in Bangui, date to be determined;
- Twentieth ministerial meeting, August 2003 in Malabo, date to be determined;
- Conduct of the Biyongho-2003 military exercise, 10 to 21 June 2003, Gabon.

IX. Consideration and adoption of the draft resolution on the activities of the Advisory Committee

The Committee considered and adopted the draft resolution on its activities, which will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

It asked the member countries to instruct their permanent representatives in New York to support fully the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution, as in previous years.

X. Date of the next meeting

The Committee decided to hold its nineteenth ministerial meeting in Bangui in March 2003, on dates to be determined.

XI. Other matters

The members of the Committee had fruitful exchanges with the secretariat on the possibility of streamlining the agendas of their meetings and on ways and means of increasing the practical benefits therefrom.

The Committee urged member States to make regular contributions to the trust fund intended to finance its activities.

Lastly, the participants welcomed the favourable climate that had prevailed throughout their deliberations and expressed their appreciation to the President of the Central African Republic, H.E. Mr. Ange-Félix Patassé, and to the Central African Government and people for the warm welcome and fraternal attentions paid to them during their stay in the Central African Republic.

Bangui, 30 August 2002